

Truth be told, the \$1 bill eye is 'providence'

By Roger Boye

This week's column answers questions about paper money, an always-popular collectible.

Q—We've noticed a human eye illustrated on the back sides of \$1 bills. Is it supposed to be George Washington's eye or what?

S.D., Merrillville, Ind.

A—It's the "eye of providence" surrounded by rays of light, signifying the glory of truth. That depiction is part of the Great Seal of the United States, which is loaded with other symbolism. For example, the eye is above an unfinished pyramid, suggesting that the country must continue to evolve into a more perfect union.

Q—While vacationing in Maine, I received a \$1 bill with a serial number of eight digit eights! Since returning home, I've called three coin dealers, all of whom say they don't want to buy my bill. Who's in the market for such an item, and how much should I expect to get? It's in new-like condition.

B.D., Decatur

A—Check a copy of Coin World, a weekly hobby newspaper sold in many coin shops for \$1.25. Some dealers who specialize in currency with unusual serial numbers advertise in the classified section.

In a widely used catalogue, currency expert Chuck O'Donnell suggests that a bill such as yours should retail for \$125. Assuming the projection is on target, you might get at least \$65 "wholesale" when selling to a dealer.

Q—We may order some uncut sheets of paper money from the government. But first we need to know: Are the bills in the sheets real money?

U.O., Chicago

A—Yes; you could cut the bills apart and spend them at the grocery store. Incidentally, a sheet of four \$1 bills costs \$9.50 by mail; 16 bills, \$28; and 32 bills, \$47. To order, send a cashier's check to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, Mail Order Sales, Room 602-11A, 14th and C Streets, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20228.

● *Questions about coins or currency? Send your queries to Roger Boye, The Arts, Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want a personal reply and allow at least three weeks for an answer.*